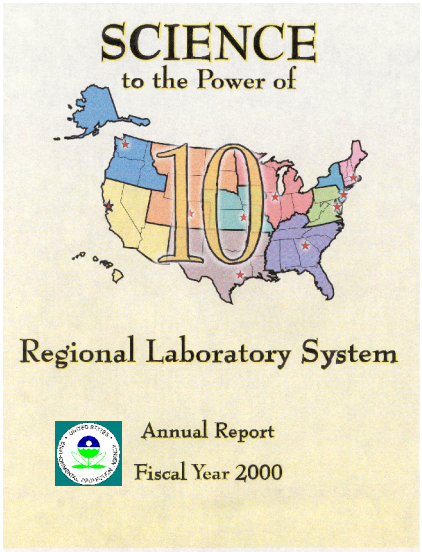
LAB NEWS

News from the Region IX Laboratory Vol. 4 No.1 August 2001

FROM THE DIRECTOR

By
Brenda Bettencourt

At its inception, the Environmental Protection Agency recognized the critical need for analytical information to support regional and Agency decisions, and established laboratories in each of the ten regions. In 1993, Region 9 opened its new laboratory in Richmond, California. Over the past several years, the regional laboratories have evolved into an interdependent network - the Regional Laboratory System.



EPA's Regional Laboratory System recently released its first annual report entitled ***"Science to the Power of 10***". The report details analytical and technical support provided in FY2000 by the regional laboratories to virtually all media programs, the Criminal Investigation Division and many Headquarters programs. In addition, the report describes specialized expertise developed by individual Regional laboratories to support specific regional issues and initiatives.

Among the FY2000 highlights in the annual report are...

- Analytical Report: The regional laboratories collectively performed approximately **95,000 analyses during FY2000**. Spanning a wide range of activities from pH analyses to interpreting and defending complex analytical and technical data to support criminal prosecutions, the regional laboratories supported the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act (Superfund), the Clean Water Act, the Safe Drinking Water Act, the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act, the Toxic Substances Control Act, and the Clean Air Act, to name the most prominent.

- Quality Systems: In FY2000, each regional laboratory received at least two major audits evaluating their quality management program and quality assurance practices. Some laboratories also received drinking water certification audits from EPA - Cincinnati. While all audits yielded findings that will help improve operations, **all laboratories were generally characterized as well staffed, well equipped and well managed**.

The report also includes details on Field Analytical Support, Criminal Program Support, Centers of Applied Science, Special Studies, Technical Support, Partnerships, Training, Outreach, Environmental Management, Health & Safety, and Facilities Management. For a complete copy of the report contact Barbara Bates at bates.barbara@epa.gov or it will soon be available on EPA's Regional Science and Technology website at http://www.epa.gov/regional/rst.htm

Teachers Go to School at the Region IX Lab

By Amy Wagner

Teacher internships at the Laboratory have allowed educators to network with professionals in the community and obtain real world experience in the subjects that they are teaching students. Two community college teachers had internships at the Laboratory through PETE (Partnership for Environmental Technological Education), a partnership between community colleges that offer certificate programs in environmental technology, government and private industry. Our PETE teacher interns learned field sampling techniques for water quality and Superfund site assessments.

Four Richmond High School teachers have participated in the local school districts School-To-Career Internship Program at the Region 9 Lab during the summer. Amy Wagner and Brenda Bettencourt received an award from the West Contra Costa Unified School District for their involvement in the School-to-Career program, and two teachers were given an award for the best curriculum developed during their internship. The teachers' internship included "bug" surveys and water quality measurements in Wildcat Creek, toxicity tests using water fleas, and a study of nonpoint source pollution issues in San Francisco Bay. The teachers' involvement in activities outside of the laboratory with local environmental groups also helped build their awareness of environmental issues in the Richmond community such as the Bucket Brigade citizen air monitoring project. In addition to broad-based exposure to environmental educational resources from the private sector and the Laboratory, the teachers benefitted from many resources and individuals in the regional office.

On-Site Field Analysis of Environmental Samples.

By Liza Finley

FASP or the *Field Analytical Support Program* is an on-site service designed to improve the EPA's ability to characterize sites evaluated under the Superfund program. FASP provides cost-effective and timely analysis of environmental samples. FASP performs both organic and inorganic analyses of a variety of environmental matrices. The Region 9 Laboratory coordinates FASP operations performed through the ESAT contract.

FASP is an efficient tool to use to reduce cost and improve quality of field investigations. Use of field analytical support can:

- Provide rapid availability of results for project managers
- Minimize analyte loss
- Reduce sample analysis cost
- Increase number of samples analyzed per site
- Reduce project hours used for sample management

FASP is intended to provide services tailored to the requirements of each individual project. The user is responsible for clearly defining project objectives and specific data quality objectives. Special requests can be made. FASP is best used when the contaminants of interest are known and the number of analytes can be narrowly focused in order to provide rapid turnaround. Typical turnaround time for preliminary data results is within 24- 48 hours. FASP is most cost-effective when many samples are collected, sample holding times are short, or analyses need to be project specific.

To request field analytical services for Superfund projects contact Peter Husby, the acting FASP Coordinator, at (510) 412-2331.

Beyond the Lab

By Ken Hendrix

Many of you know Ken Hendrix as the Region IX Laboratory Quality Assurance Officer, but beyond the lab Ken is the project director for the Willie B. Adkins Project. Read on.....

Every Monday evening throughout the school year, high school students meet for three hours in a voluntary after school program that is designed to help prepare them to continue their education after high school. Students are provided with tutoring, study skills and time management seminars, SAT/ACT preparation, positive role models who serve as guest speakers, college campus tours, cultural enrichment, scholarship and college entrance information, career counseling, and general life skills information and guidance. Parents and the community are also involved through the Parent Network and the Advisory Board. The Parent Network meets twice monthly and plays a vital role in fund raising and other support activities. The Willie B. Adkins Project, in the Vallejo City Unified School District, has an unparalleled record of helping students achieve the goal of a post secondary education. The program was started in 1987 when a grant proposal written by Mr. Adkins, then Special Projects Director for the school district, was funded by the state. The funding was part of a bill authored by Rep. Sally Tanner to support programs that helped at risk students prepare for and be successful in college. The program was initially named the Tanner Project in her honor. The funding through the state was for a two year period but because of the success of the project, the community pledged to support the program so it could continue, and continue it has. Contributions from individuals, churches, fraternities, sororities, fund raising, and support from the school districts categorical funds have been sufficient to keep the project afloat. When Mr. Adkins retired in 1998, the project was renamed to reflect the success of the project under his leadership as director, and his efforts in keeping it going even after state funding expired. The project just completed it's fourteenth year and is still going strong. Over time, the number of students served had reached 120 in one year. This past year, the numbers were limited due to staff and facility limitations. The project can boast that 98% of the graduating students have immediately enrolled in a college or university.

Ken Hendrix started working with the project in 1989 as a math and science tutor and has the longest continuous tenure of anyone ever associated with the project. For the past two years he has served as project director. He will relinquish the directorship after this year but will continue to support the project in whatever capacity is needed. If you have any questions, or would like more information about the project, please contact Ken at 510 412-2321, or by Email at Hendrix.Ken@epa.gov.

FLASH

IN THE NEXT ISSUE:

Brenda Bettencourt and Rich Bauer take a trip to Bangkok, Thailand.

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